



Agenda

- I. Introduction to Districtr
- II. Redistricting and “communities of interest”
- III. Community case study
- IV. Collecting rich, useful community maps
- V. Districtr demonstration



I. Introduction to Districtr



What is Districtr?

A **free, public mapping tool** for state legislatures, commissions, and community organizers

Developed by a team of mathematicians, data scientists, software developers, geographers, and volunteers committed to a **fair and open redistricting** process

Built **in partnership with civil rights and community groups** to customize the tool

At Districtr.org



What can you do with Districtr?

The screenshot shows the Districtr website for Virginia. The browser address bar displays <https://districtr.org/virginia>. The website's navigation bar includes links for DRAW, WHY?, RULES, EXAMPLES, and DATA. A blue map of Virginia is visible in the top left corner, and a small US map is in the top right corner.

The main content area features the word "Virginia" in large black text. Below it, there are two buttons: "Draw Districts" (highlighted in purple) and "Draw Communities" (in grey). A dashed blue arrow points from the "Draw Districts" button to the text "Districting mode" on the right side of the screen.

Below the "Draw Districts" button, there is a button labeled "Draw a plan from scratch" in a grey box. Underneath this, there are two buttons: "Statewide" (highlighted in purple) and "Cities" (in grey).

At the bottom of the page, there are three purple boxes, each representing a different type of districting plan for Virginia:

- Virginia**
11 Congressional Districts
Built out of precincts
- Virginia**
40 State Senate Districts
Built out of precincts
- Virginia**
100 House of Delegates Districts
Built out of precincts



II. Redistricting and COIs



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Virginia | Districtr

<https://districtr.org/virginia>

DRAW WHY? RULES EXAMPLES DATA

Virginia

Draw Districts Draw Communities

Draw your community

Statewide Cities

Community mode

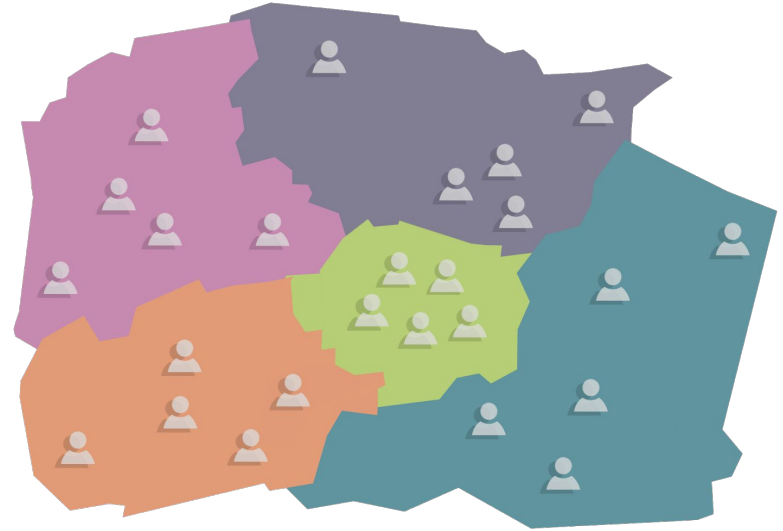
Virginia
Identify a community
Built out of block groups

Virginia
Identify a community
Built out of precincts



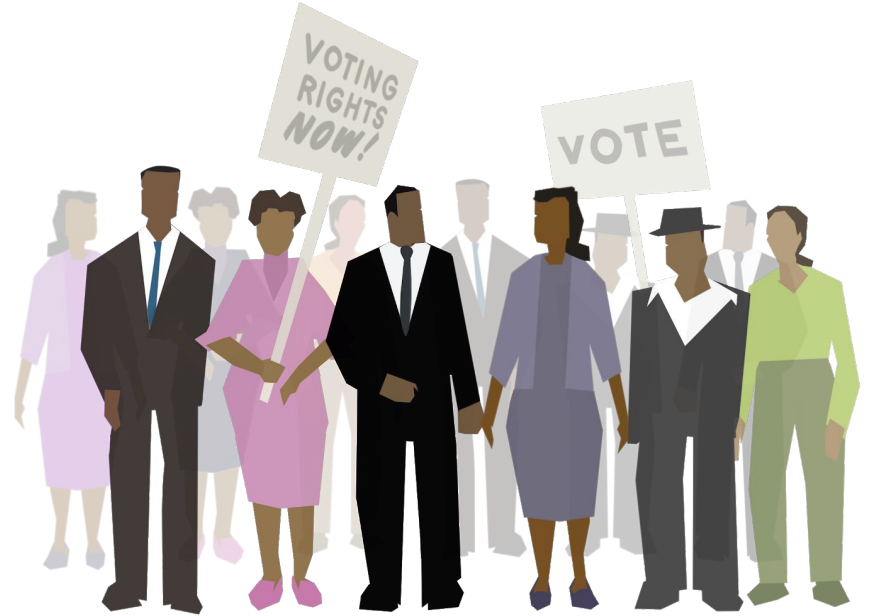
What is redistricting?

- Redrawing the **district boundaries** where elections take place
- Congress, state legislature, county commissions, city councils, school boards, and more...
- Must be redone every **10 years** after the Census to balance population



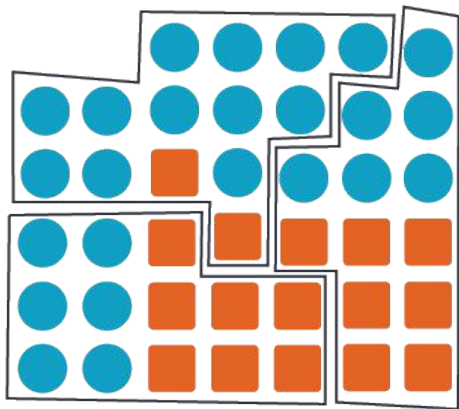
Why does it matter?

- Impacts **who has a voice**, who can run for office, and who is elected
- Many communities are well served by being **kept whole** to have a louder voice with their representative
- Some communities are better served by being **split** between districts to avoid packing

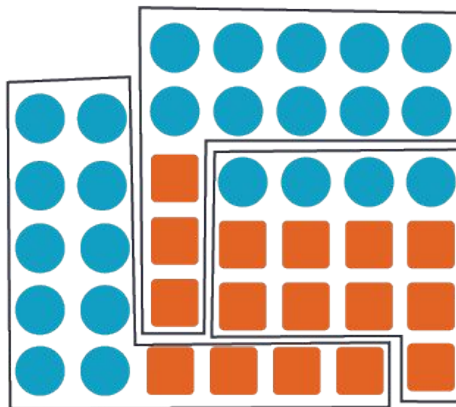


Drawing the lines

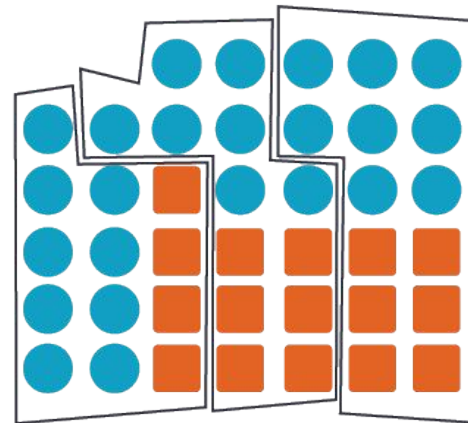
In most states, **legislators redraw their own lines**, allowing the government to choose its voters instead of the voters choosing their government!



Scenario 1



Scenario 2



Scenario 3



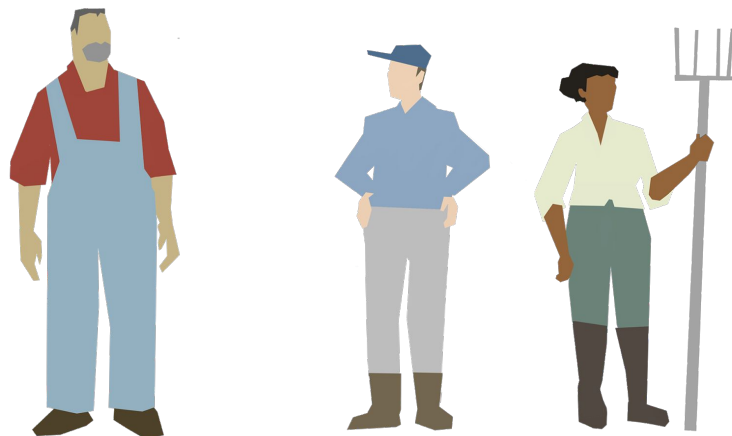
Which plan would **cats** choose?

What is a Community of Interest (COI)?

A group with **significant shared interests** that should be **given careful consideration by the line drawers**, such as...

- Small family farmers
- Residents of mountainous regions with unique environmental concerns
- Commuters who rely on the same public transit
- Residents of tourist-centric beach towns
- People who work in the same industrial sector
- Families that rely on the same public school system

Can be **rural, urban, suburban**, etc.



III. Community case studies



Let's look at a real example!

- Little Village, Chicago
- Neighborhood historically **divided into multiple city council districts** – and divided differently every time
- Many shared concerns don't get a real voice in government
 - **Violence abatement**
 - **Public health concerns** – e.g., power plant demolition

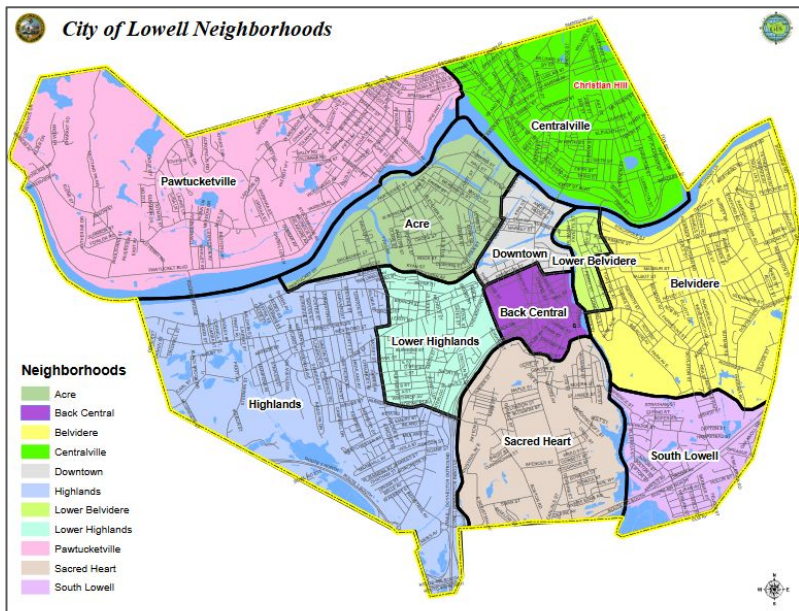


FIGURE 1.11 Little Village ward boundaries, 2015.
Source: Map Collection, University of Chicago Library.

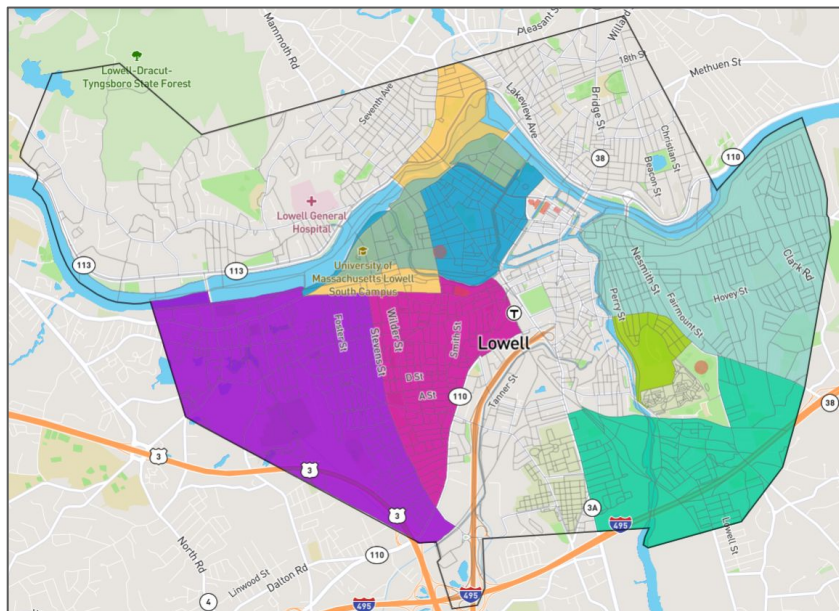
see Robert Vargas, *Wounded City*

COI point of view centers community needs

The importance of **public mapping**: Lowell, Ma



City Neighborhood Map



Community Map

*Lived experience won't quite line up with official neighborhoods –
real communities are fuzzy, overlap, or may not be on official maps at all*

IV. Collecting rich, useful community maps



Interview prompts for collecting COI narratives

- *Who is part of your community? Where do they live? What do they have in common? (Employment sector, languages spoken, pedestrian-friendly areas)*
- *What are some important places? (Commercial areas, places of worship, community centers, employers)*
- *What issues need attention from officials? What community projects need resources? (Parks, transportation, social services, schools, sidewalks, affordable housing, flood risk)*
- *What might a community meeting be about? (Violence, policing, pollution, food security)*

Navigating the COI narrative: dos and don'ts

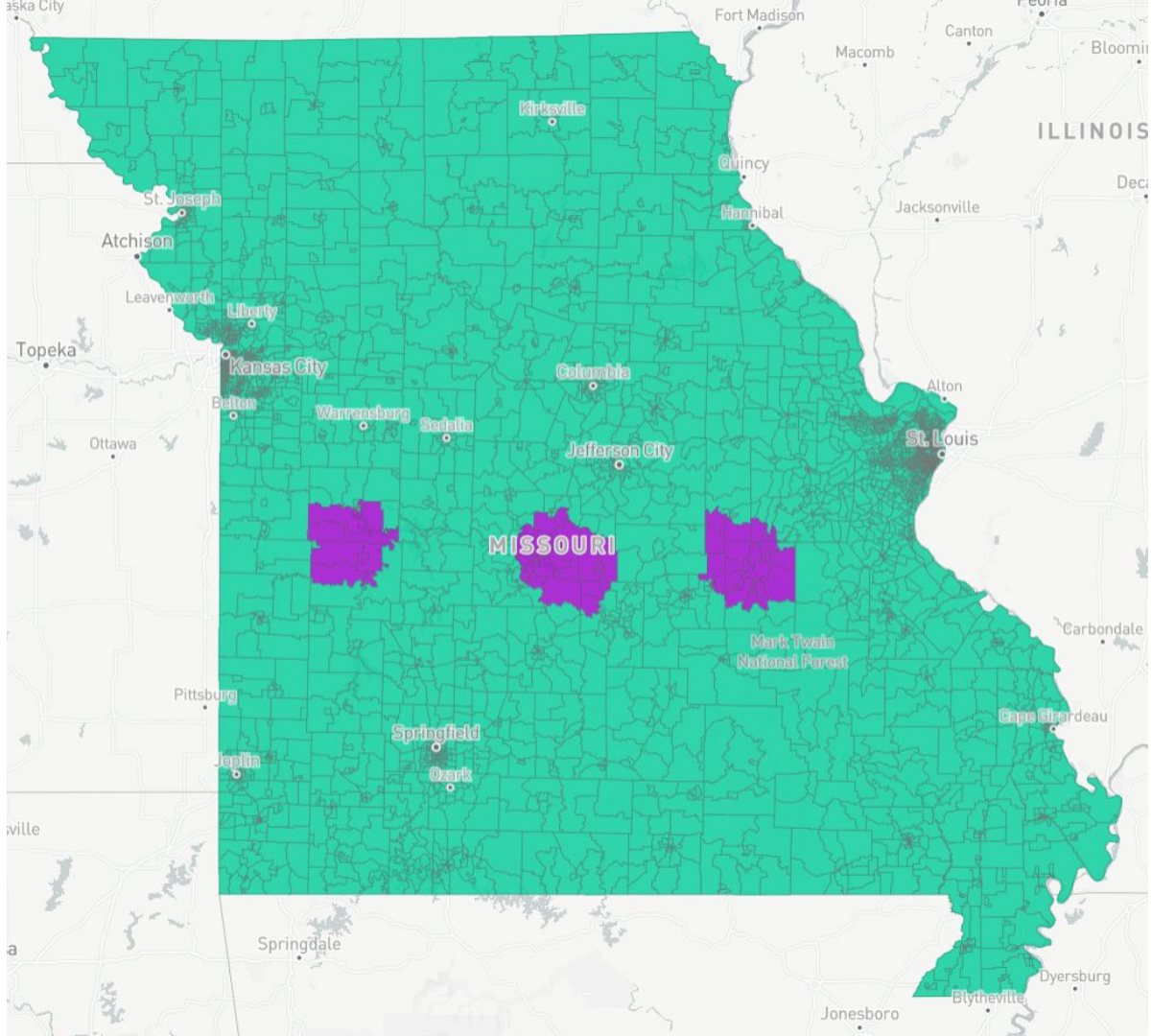
COIs cannot be **exclusively** defined by race or political party

You can steer the conversation, or ask follow-up questions, by prompting about common issues that unite the community:

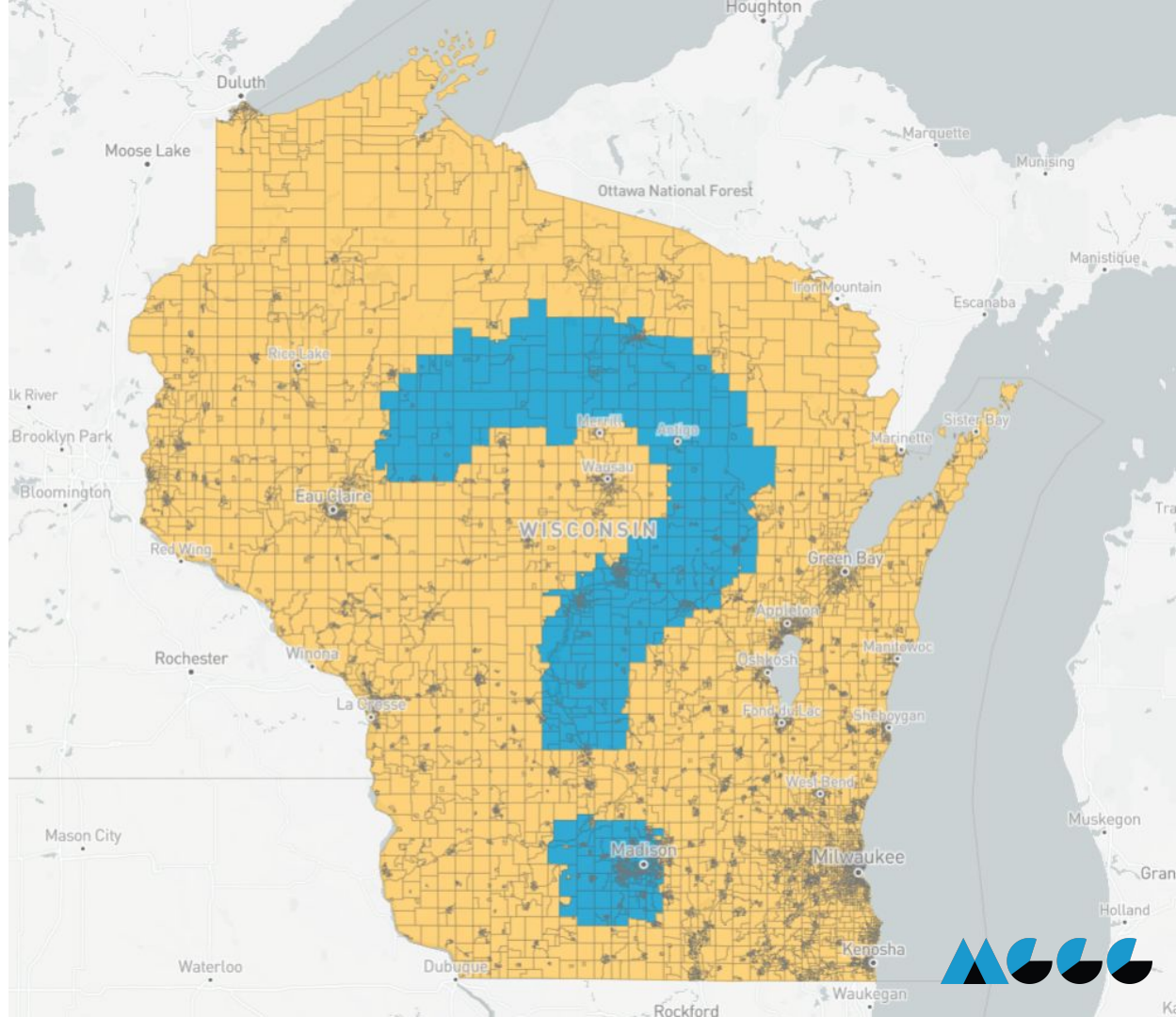
- How is this shared identity reflected in resource needs?
- Are there frequent protests here? Where do they meet? What are they about?
- Do people tend to have the same kinds of jobs or employment needs?
- What would you like your representative **to do** for your neighborhood?

Now what?

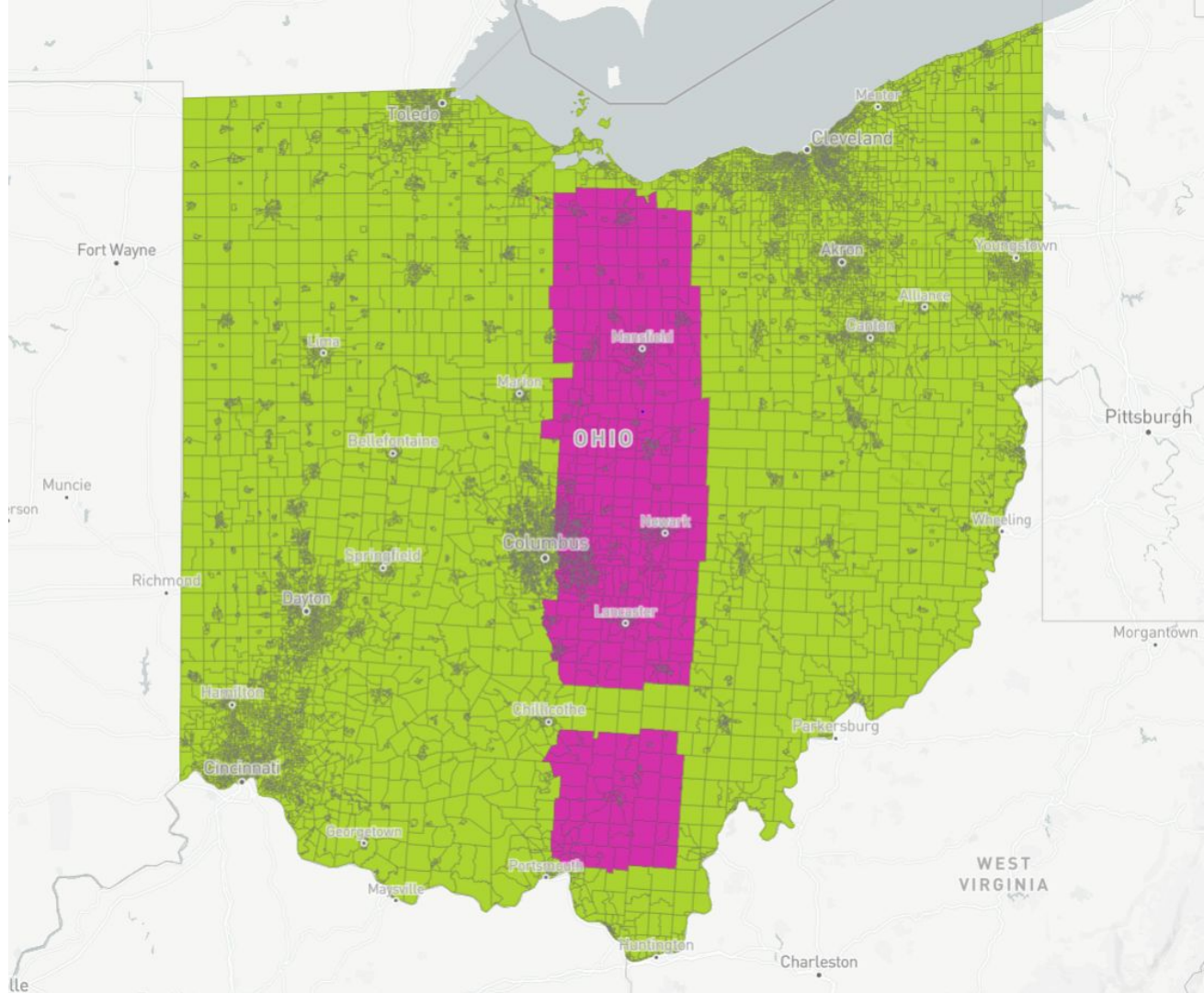
- Testify at public hearings
- Create COI maps of your own and recruit others!
 - We recommend the **interview** format
 - Groups can draw a consensus map or many individual maps
- Use public submission portals – Districtr generates URLs that are easy to share



Questions?



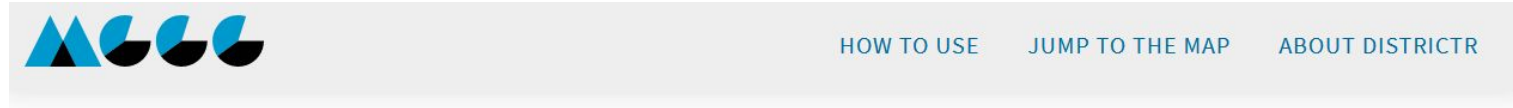
Let's
try it....



V. Districtr demo



Now let's try it on [Districtr.org](https://districtr.org)...



You draw the lines.

Districtr is a free, public web tool for districting and community identification,
brought to you by the MGGG Redistricting Lab.